

IN THE CLAIMS:

1-52. (cancelled)

53. (currently amended) A method for authenticating a maintenance and diagnostics service computer for connection to a printing or copying system to be serviced by performing maintenance and diagnostics, comprising the steps of:

generating a transaction information by an authentication server and delivering the transaction information to a user of said maintenance and diagnostics service computer, said transaction information being entered by the user of the service computer into the service computer in order to execute authentication of the service computer;

generating first data by the service computer with aid of the transaction information, said first data including a hardware identifier of hardware contained in the service computer;

transmitting said first data from the service computer to the authentication server over a data line;

generating key data by the authentication server depending on the first data and transmitting the key data from the authentication server to the service computer over the data line, said key data defining access rights of the service computer;

with the service computer generating authentication information for authenticating the service computer with aid of the key data;

transmitting the authentication information from the service computer to a system control unit of said printing or copying system;

verifying authenticity of the service computer by the system control unit; and

with the system control unit checking said access rights defined by the key data of the service computer, and if access is authorized, servicing by performing

said maintenance and diagnostics on the printing or copying system with the maintenance and diagnostics service computer.

54. (previously presented) A method according to claim 53 wherein a check is performed to determine whether the service computer contains the hardware identifier.

55. (previously presented) A method according to claim 53 wherein the key data contain an expiration date in addition to said access rights.

56. (previously presented) A method according to claim 55 wherein the access rights are assigned with aid of an authorization level.

57. (previously presented) A method according to claim 53 wherein the key data are transmitted in encrypted form.

58. (previously presented) A method according to claim 53 wherein the data line comprises a network connection.

59. (previously presented) A method according to claim 53 wherein the data line comprises a point-to-point connection.

60. (previously presented) A method according to claim 53 wherein the transaction information comprises a transaction number.

61. (previously presented) A method according to claim 53 wherein the transaction information is sent per e-mail or mail to the user.

62. (previously presented) A method according to claim 61 wherein the transaction information that is sent to the service computer is entered by way of an input unit of the service computer.

63. (previously presented) A method according to claim 53 wherein said hardware identifier of the service computer that cannot be modified by a user is used as said hardware identifier.

64. (previously presented) A method according to claim 53 wherein said authenticity verifying by the authentication server is performed with aid of a challenge/response procedure.

65. (previously presented) A method according to claim 53 wherein the key data contain a signed certificate.

66. (previously presented) A method according to claim 53 wherein the key data contains a key, and the authentication information sent to the printing or copying system contains an authentication code generated with the aid of the key.

67. (currently amended) A system for authenticating a maintenance and diagnostics service computer for connection to a printing or a copying system to be serviced by performing maintenance and diagnostics, comprising:

an authentication server which generates a transaction information and delivers the transaction information to a user of said maintenance and diagnostics service computer, said transaction information being entered by the user of the service computer into the service computer in order to execute authentication of the service computer;

said service computer generating first data with aid of the transaction information, said first data including a hardware identifier of hardware contained in the service computer;

said service computer transmitting said first data from the service computer to the authentication server over the data line;

said authentication server generating key data depending on the first data and transferring the key data from the authentication server to the service computer over the data line, said key data defining said access rights of the service computer;

said service computer generating authentication information for authenticating the service computer with aid of the key data;

said service computer transmitting the authentication information from the service computer to a system control unit of said printing or copying system;

said system control unit verifying authenticity of the service computer; and

said system control unit checking said access rights defined by the key data of the service computer and if access is authorized, servicing by performing said maintenance and diagnostics on the printing or copying system with the maintenance and diagnostics service computer.